

The purpose of the 2025 Together for Children conference is to provide information and skills that support a multidisciplinary approach to improve prevention, treatment, investigation and prosecution of child abuse and neglect. Topics presented will address emerging issues, research questions and public policy changes in child welfare and child protection. As a reminder, the materials presented at the Together for Children Conference are for continuing education purposes only. The content and material shared during this event reflect an approach, view, experience, statement or opinion of the presenters or authors, and do not necessarily reflect the views of Children's Wisconsin or Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin (PCAW). Moreover, the presence of any speaker, author, vendor or participant in the conference does not constitute an endorsement of their organization, views or services. Lastly, the information shared during the event does not create any patient-physician relationship and should not be used as a substitute for professional diagnosis.

## 2025 Virtual Together for Children October 14-16, 2025

### Tuesday, Oct. 14: Conference Day 1

**8:45 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.** Welcome & Keynote  
**10:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.** Breakout session

### Wednesday, Oct. 15: Conference Day 2

**12:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.** Breakout sessions

### Thursday, Oct. 16: Conference Day 3

**9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.** Breakout sessions

### Conference Fees

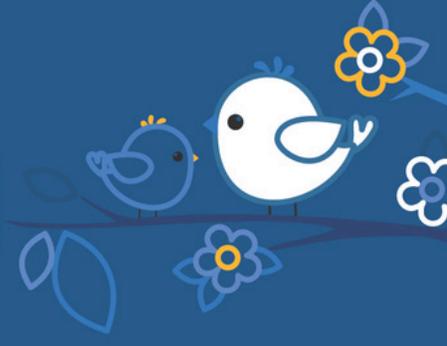
**Registration Fee: \$100**

**Registration Deadline: Oct. 6, 2025**

The registration fee covers admission to all three days of the virtual conference, including the keynote by Jimmy Widdifield, Jr.

### Who should attend?

- Child advocacy center personnel
- Child protective services
- CASA staff and volunteers
- Sexual assault and domestic violence personnel
- Judicial officers, attorneys & guardians ad litem
- Law enforcement officials
- Medical and health professionals
- Multi-disciplinary teams
- School personnel
- Social workers, therapists, and psychologists
- Foster care workers and parents
- Anyone interested in child abuse & neglect issues and prevention



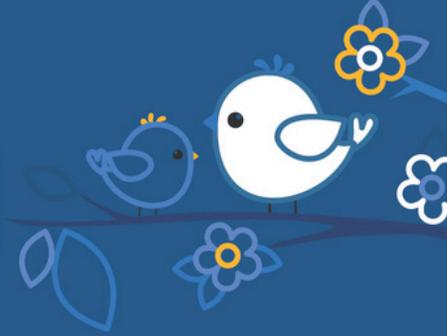
## Continuing Education

Additional information regarding continuing education hours will be updated as the accreditation organizations approve the conference hours.

## Conference Agenda

### Tuesday, Oct. 14: Conference Day 1

<p><b>8:45 a.m. - 9 a.m.</b></p>	<p>Welcome and opening comments</p>
<p><b>9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Keynote</u></b>  <b>These Kids Deserve Our Help, too: Children and Teens with Problematic Sexual Behavior</b>  <b>Jimmy Widdifield, Jr., MA, LPC   National Children's Advocacy Center</b></p> <p>All children and teens deserve help and support, even those who initiate problematic sexual behaviors with other children. Research is clear that an evidence-based response to these youth results in success for the initiating youth, child recipients, and their families. In this session, you, the professional, will learn how to make a positive difference in these cases by learning what the research suggests about these children and teens and what we know makes a difference.</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants will be able to summarize common characteristics of children and teens with problematic sexual behavior.</li> <li>2. Participants will be able to describe strategies to enhance professional response to cases of children and teens with problematic sexual behavior.</li> </ol>
<p><b>10:30 a.m. - 11 a.m.</b></p>	<p>Break</p>



**Breakout Sessions:**

**Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders: Learning Styles, Behavior, and Intervention**

*Tristin Nyman-Mallis, PhD*

Children exposed to alcohol in utero are at risk of having a Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) - the leading preventable cause of intellectual disability in children. This workshop provides an overview of FASD diagnosis, common learning styles, behavior challenges, and recommendations for working with the FASD community. While there are barriers to early identification of FASD, knowing the common features, learning styles, and behavior patterns of children with FASD can support access to early intervention across settings.

**Objectives:**

1. Increase familiarity with common learning, behavioral, and emotional profiles for children with FASD.
2. Incorporate knowledge of neurobehavioral and neuropsychological outcomes in FASD to inform intervention and interactions with FASD population.

**11 a.m. -  
12:30 p.m.**

Appropriate for all attendees

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**Layering Prevention: How to build non-traditional partnerships across organizations**

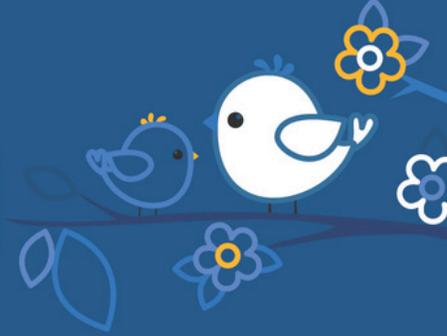
*Laura Staats, MSW, APSW; Heather Dederling, BA; Aviva Herman, LCSW*

With numerous approaches and focuses within child abuse prevention, the work can end up in silos, stretching resources and limiting the impact that the community sees. In this session, learn how a child sexual abuse primary prevention program – Awareness to Action – found a non-traditional partner in the Wisconsin Department of Corrections – Sex Offender Registry and united in a collective impact strategy alongside Prevent Child Abuse Wisconsin. This example of discovering shared purpose across programs will demonstrate how to look beyond usual community partners and inspire innovation.

**Objective:**

1. Understand how organizations with seemingly different goals and strategies can discover and cultivate areas of alignment, allowing them to coordinate prevention efforts across professional fields.

Appropriate for all attendees



**Breakout Sessions:**

**Pathways to Economic Stability: The Promise of Guaranteed Income Programs**

*Luke Waldo, MEd*

While Wisconsin defines neglect as the failure, refusal, or inability to care for a child for reasons other than poverty, we can't ignore the fact that 85% of families investigated by our child welfare system live below 200% of the federal poverty line. In 2023, Chapin Hall reported on the impacts of poverty on child neglect and abuse that shows that supports to families with low incomes, like those provided through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, reduce the risk of child maltreatment. What if we were to think about programs like TANF and Guaranteed Income that we commonly think of as anti-poverty programs as child maltreatment prevention programs that keep families together? How might we build partnerships across systems that empower the economic stability of overloaded families, so that we may change the conditions that overload families and make them vulnerable to our most intrusive systems?

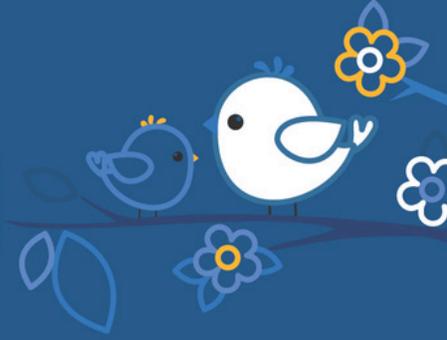
Join us as we explore the impacts of poverty and economic instability on parental stress, child neglect, and child protective services; the impacts of economic stability on child and family well-being; the potential and promise of Guaranteed Income programs like the Madison Forward Fund; and how our Strong Families, Thriving Children, Connected Communities network can help advance these promising practices and policies for overloaded families.

**Objectives:**

1. Explore the impacts of poverty and economic instability on parental stress, child neglect and child protective services exposure and involvement.
2. Explore the impacts of economic stability on child and family well-being.
3. Learn about Guaranteed Income and a local pilot, the Madison Forward Fund, how it was implemented, and its potential to improve family economic stability.
4. Learn about the Strong Families, Thriving Children, Connected Communities initiative and how to engage with its statewide network that seeks to advance practices and policies that improve family economic stability.

Appropriate for all attendees

**11 a.m. -  
12:30 p.m.**



## Wednesday, Oct. 15: Conference Day 2

### **Breakout Sessions**

#### **Learning Brain & Survival Brain: Understanding the Biology of Trauma**

*Ricky Ferrari Traner, CSW, MPA, CTICP*

This workshop will provide a detailed explanation of how adversity affects human growth and development. Participants will leave this workshop with a greater understanding of and practical framework for applying trauma-informed care in their work.

#### Objectives:

1. Participants will understand how adversity can affect child and adult biology & behavior
2. Participants will explore how to effectively apply trauma-informed care principles into practice

Appropriate for all attendees

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#### **Multi-Disciplinary Response when a Child Recants Abuse: A review of the Brown County MDT Recantation Guidelines**

*Kristie Sickel, MSW, CSW; Megan Hackl; Jodi Stahl*

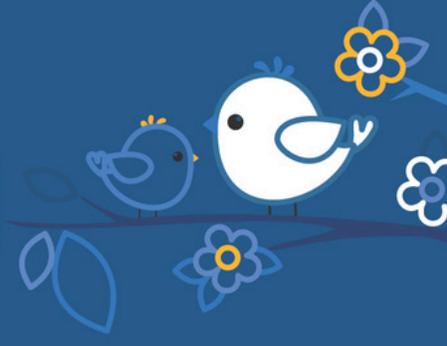
This presentation will focus on the MDT approach when investigating child abuse cases involving a recantation of prior abuse. The presentation will begin with an overview of child sexual abuse dynamics, primarily highlighting delayed disclosure and the process of disclosure. Presenter will outline the risks of recantation, common reasons why a child recants abuse, supports MDT members can put in place to help prevent recantation, as well as an overview the Brown County MDT Recantation, which has been adopted to the Willow Tree CAC Brown County Interagency Agreement on a Collaborative Response to Child Maltreatment. Attendees will be able to learn how MDT partners can work together to better understand the reason for the recantation and that a recantation of abuse, should not automatically mean the case should be dismissed. Past cases involving recantation of abuse, will also be reviewed.

#### Objectives:

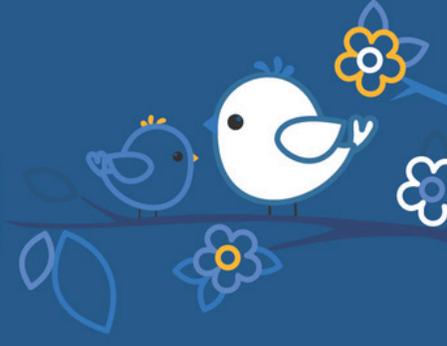
1. Understand reasons children recant by exploring risks while also looking at ways to minimize recantation.
2. Describe best practice and how to collaborate effectively as an MDT when a child is reporting a recantation.

Appropriate for all attendees

**12:30 p.m. -  
2 p.m.**



<p><b>2 p.m. - 2:30 p.m.</b></p>	<p>Break</p>
<p><b>2:30 p.m. - 4 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Breakout Sessions</u></b></p> <p><b>Overview of Child Trauma Investigations from an MDT Standpoint</b> <i>Jesse Crowe; Lisa Seidel; Jackie Larson</i></p> <p>This will be a full day workshop that will cover investigative techniques and a multi-disciplinary approach to investigations involving the abuse of children. Topics covered will be internet crimes against children, human trafficking of children, physical abuse of children and child homicide investigations. Multiple staff from the WI DOJ will present on a wide array of investigations into the abuse of children.</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants will be aware of what resources the Wisconsin Department of Justice can provide during investigations into child trauma.</li> <li>2. Participants will be aware of what resources can be provided to parents and community members for internet safety.</li> </ol> <p>Appropriate for all attendees</p> <hr/> <p><b>Connections &amp; Supports with Relatives</b> <i>Moe Green, MSW, APSW; Britny Isaacs</i></p> <p>This workshop will focus on outlining Wisconsin’s efforts to align with the federal legislation; Family’s First. Specifically, DCF’s vision of all Wisconsin children and youth being safe and loved members of thriving families and communities, with a goal of maintaining connections and support with relatives. Children initially placed with relatives, on average, see more placement stability and opportunities to stay connected to family, community and culture when compared with children initially placed with nonrelatives. In the first half of 2024, of all the children who entered out-of-home care, only 41% were placed with relatives as their first placement. Some barriers to placement with relatives include their past criminal history, their “allegiance” to their family rather than the child welfare agency, and because the foster parents are “known” by the child welfare agency. Policy and best practice support working with relatives through these perceived barriers so children can be with who they know and love. So then why are more children placed in non-relative care than with their relatives? Together we will take a closer look at these barriers and discuss whether these barriers are true safety concerns, or values held by the child welfare workforce, and how to work those barriers.</p>



**2:30 p.m. -  
4 p.m.**

Objectives:

Participants will be provided an overview of the structure of the child welfare system and how a family's case flows through it. Families First will be explained emphasizing of the importance of keeping children connected to their families and maintaining connections with relatives during non-relative placements.

Participants will also learn about:

1. The vast reach of the CW system.
2. Inequities in the CW system.
3. Misconceptions about the CW system.
4. Poverty vs. neglect

Appropriate for all attendees

## Thursday, Oct. 16: Conference Day 3

**9 a.m. -  
10:30 a.m.**

**Breakout Sessions**

**Child Abuse Pediatrics 101**

*Rachel Segal, MD, MPH*

This session will educate professionals on the medical specialty of Child Abuse Pediatrics. It will explain the training that CAPs undergo, the importance of a medical evaluation during maltreatment cases, and discuss how to refer to teams within the state of Wisconsin. Another aim is to provide general education regarding sentinel injuries/a physical abuse overview.

Objectives:

1. Understand what a child abuse pediatrician does and how to refer child maltreatment cases for medical evaluations
2. Participants will be able to identify sentinel injuries in children

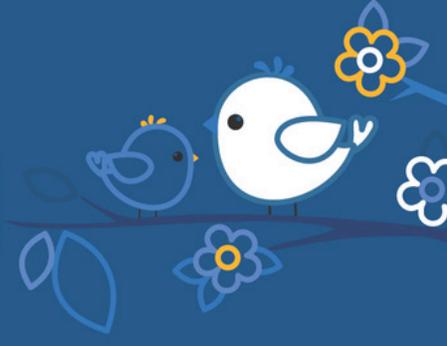
Appropriate for all attendees

**Social Connectedness One Relationship at a Time**

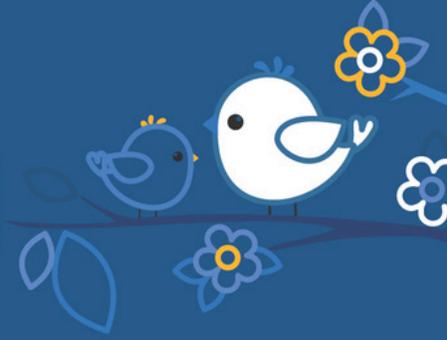
*Meghan Christian, LCSW; Lori Jensen; Jessica Frost; Josh Mersky*

Prevention resources, while abundant, often remain unknown to those who need them most. This social disconnection fuels the severity and number of people in crisis, creating difficult situations for overloaded families, first responders and policy makers.





<p><b>9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.</b></p>	<p>In this session, hear about collective caregiving from Safe Families for Children, Children’s Community Health Advocacy and Family Resource Centers. Participate in a moderated discussion around successes in accessibility and propose strategies to increase awareness and utilization among influential stakeholders.</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Identify at least five underutilized child neglect prevention resources available in our state.</li> <li>2. Learn how these prevention services are improving the social connectedness of parents and caregivers impacted by social isolation.</li> <li>3. Understand barriers and enhancers in access to these resources.</li> </ol> <p>Appropriate for all attendees</p>
<p><b>10:30 - 11 a.m.</b></p>	<p>Break</p>
<p><b>11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.</b></p>	<p><b><u>Breakout Sessions:</u></b></p> <p><b>Building a Culture of Safety: Fostering Quality Initiatives for Group Care Providers</b> <i>Jeannette Paules, MSW; Katie Davis, MS, MPA</i></p> <p>Discover how the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families’ child welfare licensing team (CWLS) and group care providers are working towards changing their relationship from purely oversight and regulation to one of communication and collaboration by focusing on empowering group care staff in utilizing safety science principles to improve the quality of care. In this session, learn how Practice Communities facilitate knowledge sharing and collaboration, enabling providers to implement best practices and mitigate risks effectively. Discover the transformative role of the Safe Systems Improvement Tool for Congregate Care in driving systems change through data-driven decision-making and targeted interventions. And explore how Learning Labs foster a culture of safety, where knowledge sharing and reflection drive innovation.</p> <p><u>Objectives:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Participants will gain knowledge about DCF’s Quality Initiatives with group care providers</li> <li>2. Participants will identify the principles of psychological safety and mindful organizing</li> <li>3. Participants will understand and complete the Safe Systems Improvement Tool for Congregate Care</li> </ol> <p>Appropriate for all attendees</p>



**11 a.m. -  
12:30 p.m.**

**What's in your cup? Practical, Whole-Person Self-Care**

*Rebecca Green Blanks, MSW, APSW, Pn1*

We hear it all the time...“You can’t pour from an empty cup!” “You have to take care of yourself in order to take care of others.” “Your health is your wealth.” We are inundated with what we should do for self-care, but how often do we intentionally engage in quality self-care habits? Do we even know what deep-health practices work best for us? This workshop engages and empowers you to better identify healthy and practical self-care and care for self options across the domains of mind, body and spirit. You will leave with a individualized self-care menu and skills to help others identify ways to be their best self.

Objectives:

1. Identify the connection between mental, emotional, and physical self-care
2. Develop an individual self-care menu

Appropriate for all attendees